

HOMILY OF HIS EXCELLENCY ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
MEMORIAL OF SAINT PAUL MIKI AND COMPANIONS
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My Dear Friends in Christ,

As the Apostolic Nuncio, the representative of the Holy Father to the United States, I greet you in the name of Pope Francis and convey to you his spiritual closeness and paternal affection. I thank Alicia Simon, Director of Membership and Catholic Education, for her assistance with this liturgy, as well as Alexia Kelley, the President and CEO of FADICA, for the invitation to join you.

In today's Gospel, Jesus sends his disciples out on mission two by two to proclaim repentance, to cast out demons, and to heal the sick – all signs of the coming of the Kingdom. He sends them out instructing them to take nothing with them for the journey; they are to rely on the generosity of others. Certainly, FADICA's mission, cultivating and fostering generosity, coincides with the values of the Gospel, assisting the Church in her universal mission by promoting innovation and excellent stewardship.

While Jesus' disciples are to rely on the generosity of others, the mission begins and ends with Jesus Himself. He summons the Twelve to be with Him before giving them authority and sending them forth. Each day, before we begin our work in the Lord's vineyard, we too must have an awareness of Christ's love and ask that our love for Him grow. This demands prayer – being with God and conversing with Him. A person who does not speak to his Beloved does not truly love Him. We can say our prayers, pray the psalms, come to Mass, teach the Faith, raise funds to promote the Faith, but there is a distance between speaking *of* Christ and speaking to Him. We need silence in prayer to speak to Him from our heart, to know His love and to truly know Him, and to understand the nature and scope of our mission.

Jesus loves us. He is with us. He never leaves us alone in our mission. He sends out the Twelve two by two, helping them to realize that they must work together for the Kingdom. He sends them as beggars, but as beggars who support one another in their mission. They have a task, and through His instruction they discover their mission. They are not going on a vacation; rather, they are beginning the adventure of sharing in the Lord's mission. It is His mission, and they will carry out their task on the basis of the authority they receive from Him.

Jesus had a dream of making the Kingdom of God known. He asked the Twelve to cooperate in that mission. Pope Francis too has a dream for the Church. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, he wrote:

I dream of a “missionary option”, that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation. (EG, 27)

At the beginning of his Pontificate, when visiting Brazil, he spoke of a mission which is both *programmatic and paradigmatic*. The programmatic mission is a series of missionary activities; while, the paradigmatic mission “involves setting in a missionary key all the day-to-day activities ... Clearly this entails

a whole process of reforming ecclesial structures. The ‘change of structures’ will not be the result of reviewing the organizational flow chart, which would lead to a static reorganization; rather, it will result from the very dynamics of mission.” (Pope Francis, Address to the Leadership of CELAM, 28 July 2013)

Pope Francis dreams of a new missionary spirit. Only from this paradigmatic choice to be a missionary Church will authentic reform, vital for evangelization, flow. Just as wind pushes against a sail and causes a boat to move upon the water, so too the Spirit of God pushes the whole Church to go forth into the world, attentive to the signs of the times and the needs of the people, jettisoning that which is obsolete. Pope Francis adds that “What makes obsolete structures pass away, what leads to a change of heart in Christians, is precisely *missionary* spirit.”

Part of this change of heart in the Church demands poverty. While money and fund-raising help the Church carry out her mission, she cannot be effective if she becomes dependent upon material wealth. The Lord sends the Twelve out two by two. He wants them to recognize that the success of their mission depends not principally on material goods and human efforts but on the power of the Spirit and on His authority.

Jesus sends His disciples on mission with very little not only to teach them a love of poverty but also to foster in them a sense of trust, even in the face of uncertainty. If we think we possess something, we come to depend on it, rely on it. Our sense of innovation and pursuit in hope of something better diminishes. Poverty keeps the disciples from placing their hope in a particular, present material possession rather than in their present relationship with Christ. Non-poverty is opposed to hope because through it, one places one’s security in a present possession; this means that hope is no longer a response to Christ. Authentic hope, Christian hope, is having certainty in Christ Himself, which becomes the foundation of certainty for the future.

This is what I want to impress on you: our certainty for the future of our Church, our world, our mission comes from our present relationship with Christ. If I possess Him, if I am rooted in Him, then I am certain about the future, even in a changing and changed world. This is what it means to hope: to fix our gaze firmly on Christ, knowing that His gaze is fixed firmly upon us. To possess Him is to have hope for a better future. Anything else we possess can be taken away from us.

It is interesting that the next section of St. Mark’s Gospel relates the imprisonment and beheading of John the Baptist. He was faithful to his mission as the Forerunner of the Messiah and placed his hope – even for eternity – on the Messiah and so was able to bear witness to Christ. May we also come to know Christ through prayer, making Him the center of our life and mission and the object of our hope. Our true success in our mission and in life, both now and for eternity, depends on Him.